

CLAIMS:

1. Apparatus for providing two-way communication between a first user and a further user comprising:  
5       a master communication device; and  
      a slave communication device, disguised as an everyday object, and including circuitry means for enabling said two-way communication via said master communication device said circuitry means comprising  
10   voice alteration means for disguising said further users voice; wherein  
      said slave communication device and said further users voice is disguised so that when said two-way communication is in progress, said first user will  
15   believe that said communication is between said first user and said everyday object.
2. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein:  
      each communication device includes speaker means for  
20   providing an audible voice signal;  
      microphone means for converting voice patterns of a user into a format for transmittal over a communication link as a communication signal; and  
      communication signal transmitting and receiving  
25   means for respectively transmitting and receiving at least one communication signal.
3. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the disguise of said slave communication device comprises  
30   an outer body portion surrounding substantially all of the circuitry of said slave communication device.
4. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 3 wherein said disguise includes at least one movable

portion arranged to move independently with respect of  
said body portion of the disguise and includes means for  
moving said movable portion responsive to a movement  
control signal received from said master communication  
5 device.

5. Apparatus as claimed in claim 4 wherein said master  
communication device includes control means for  
generating and transmitting a movement control signal to  
10 said slave communication device.

6. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 5  
wherein said slave communication device includes a power  
switch accessible without the need to remove said body  
15 portion.

7. Apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 6  
wherein said apparatus is disguised as a teddy bear.

20 8. Apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 6  
wherein said apparatus is disguised as a child's doll.

9. Apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 8  
wherein said first user comprises a child and said  
25 further user comprises a parent or teacher.

10. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 8  
wherein said first user comprises a user with learning  
difficulties.

30 11. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein said  
slave communication device comprises a computer including  
a user interface, said user interface including a screen  
for displaying an image of a character.

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## ART 34 AMDT

12. The apparatus as claimed in claim 11 wherein said user interface further comprises at least one speaker member for producing audible sounds to said first user.

13. The apparatus as claimed in claim 11 wherein said  
5 user interface further comprises at least one microphone for receiving audible sounds generated by said first user.

14. The apparatus as claimed in claim 11 wherein the  
10 computer is arranged to display images which conceal the fact that a conversation is between said first user and said further user.

15. The apparatus as claimed in claim 11 wherein said  
15 computer is optionally (i) a PC (ii) a laptop computer or (iii) a personal data assistant.

16. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein said  
20 master communication device comprises a computer and said slave communication device comprises a screen for displaying an image of a character responsive to signals received from said computer.

17. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein voice  
25 alteration means disguises said further users voice to sound like a predetermined character.

18. A method for providing two-way communication between a first user and a further user comprising the steps of:  
30 providing a slave communication device, disguised as an everyday object and including voice alteration means for disguising said further users voice, and a master communication device arranged for two-way communication therebetween;

providing said further user with access to only said master communication device and said first user with access to only said slave device; and

transmitting and receiving at least one  
5 communication signal over a wireless communication link between said master and slave devices; whereby

by virtue of the disguise of said slave communication device and said further users voice the two-way communication will appear, to said first user, to  
10 be between said first user and said everyday object.

19. The method as claimed in claim 18 further comprising disguising said slave communication device by the steps of surrounding substantially all of the circuitry of said  
15 slave communication device with a preformed body portion formed to look like said everyday object.

20. The method as claimed in claim 18 or claim 18 further comprising, prior to said step of providing said  
20 further user with access to only said master communication device, providing said further user with access to said slave communication device during a period of time in which said further user may switch on power to the slave communication device.

25 21. The method as claimed in claim 20 wherein said step of switching power on comprises pressing a button disguised on said slave communication device.

30 22. The method as claimed in any one of claims 18 to 21 wherein said steps of transmitting and receiving a communication signal comprises providing a two-channel radio service between said slave and master devices.

23. The method as claimed in any one of claims 18 to 22 further comprising:

transmitting, from said master communication device, a movement control signal;

5 receiving said movement control signal at said slave communication device; and

moving at least one movable portion of said disguise independently with respect to said body portion on said disguise of said slave communication device responsive to  
10 said movement control signal.

24. The method as claimed in claim 22 further comprising selecting a one from a plurality of movable portions of said disguise via said master communication device.

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25. The method as claimed in claim 17 further comprising disguising said further users voice to sound like a predetermined character.

20 26. A method for promoting learning in a learner user comprising the steps of:

providing a slave communication device disguised as an everyday object and including voice alteration means for disguising a tutors voice and a master communication  
25 device;

transmitting and receiving at least one communication signal over a wireless communication link between said master device and said slave device; whereby  
a further user having access to only said master  
30 device can communicate, via said communication link, with said learner user having access to only said slave device thereby promoting learning in said learner user.

27. The method as claimed in claim 26 wherein said learner user comprises a child and said further user comprises a parent or teacher.

5 28. The method as claimed in claim 26 wherein said learner user comprises a user with learning difficulties.

29. The method as claimed in any one of claims 26 to 28 wherein said everyday object comprises a toy.

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30. The method as claimed in claim 26 further comprising disguising said tutors voice to sound like a predetermined character.

15 31. Apparatus constructed and arranged substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

20 32. A method substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.